

Alexandria Times-Tribune

Founded:

Alexandria Times: 1885

Alexandria Tribune: 1898

Alexandria Times-Tribune: 1903

Location:

Alexandria Times: Southwest corner of Harrison and Church Streets, Alexandria (1885–); office at rear of Hupp Grocery; Washington Street; 210 North Canal Street

Alexandria Tribune: Original location unknown, Alexandria; 210 North Canal Street; West Church Street (1902); Tribune Building, corner of Harrison and John Streets

Alexandria Times-Tribune: Original location unknown, Alexandria; 111 South Harrison Street; 107–109 South Clinton Street; Printer Zink Building, Road 9 South; One Harrison Square (1997)

On 10 December 1885 the citizens of Alexandria lined up to purchase the first copies of the *Alexandria Times*, an independent newspaper published by Thomas Nye French. French was born near Boston, Massachusetts, in 1837. His family had long been involved in boot and shoe manufacturing, and he learned the trade as a youth. In 1870 French migrated to Indiana to take a job as a cutter with W. W. Comstock, a large shoe manufacturer in Lafayette. Five years later French founded the *Square Dealer* in Lafayette, a small weekly that he later merged with the *Commercial Advertiser*. He continued to publish the latter newspaper until 1885. That year, lured by a group of businessmen who promised \$300 worth of advertising, French shipped his Proudy handpress to Alexandria. The first pressrun of the *Times* was 240 copies. The community, poised for economic growth, was eager to have a paper; local business leaders ensured that French received credit from the Elwood Bank. French, in turn, joined in the community's booster spirit, early advocating efforts to drill for natural gas. After gas was discovered in 1893, Alexandria joined in the gas-belt boom.

In 1892 French began publishing a daily edition of the *Times*. His precocious fourteen-year-old son Arthur G. “Art” French was editor. Art had begun setting type at the age of ten, standing on a chair to reach the cases. The paper had 550 subscribers by 1892. French sold the paper to Ohio-born newspaperman George R. Browning in 1893, and it quickly experienced a drastic drop in circulation. In 1898 Thomas French returned to publishing and with a group of local investors that included his son Art founded the *Alexandria Tribune*. Meanwhile, a group of investors formed the Alexandria Times Company, headed by Otho F. Lines, purchased the *Times* around 1902, and converted the publication of the daily to twice a week—Tuesdays and Thursdays. Lines continued to publish the weekly edition on Saturday.

In 1903 the *Times* and *Tribune* merged under the ownership of the Times-Tribune Publishing Company, which included Thomas and Art French as investors. Thomas remained as editor of the combined *Alexandria Times-Tribune*, which appeared as a Republican daily, until 1905. In July of that year F. C. Headington, an investor in the Times-Tribune Publishing Company, purchased the interests of the Frenches. Over the next several years the ownership and editorship of the newspaper (as well as ownership of the printing plant) changed several times. In November 1905 the paper suspended publication for two weeks until Robert M. Yelvington purchased it and resumed publication. Thomas French returned as editor in 1906. After another change of ownership in 1906-7, Yelvington reacquired the paper in 1907. At some point Art French purchased the newspaper’s job printing department and with his brother-in-law Art Clark established an independent job printing firm known as Art Printing Company.

Yelvington owned the *Times-Tribune* until 1913, when William F. Baum purchased the paper. Yelvington remained as editor of the now independent paper. In 1919 Baum purchased the Art Printing Company. By 1924 the paper's circulation reached 1,243. In 1925 DeLoss Arnold purchased the paper from Baum. In January 1934 Richard E. Emshwiller, a Montpelier native who had joined the *Times-Tribune* staff the previous year, purchased the paper from Arnold in partnership with Yelvington. Yelvington at that time owned the newspaper's printing plant. Emshwiller edited and published the paper until his death in November 1941. His widow Ruth Emshwiller carried on after his death with the aid of Yelvington. By the time Yelvington died in July 1946 he had put in forty-three years with the *Times-Tribune*. Ruth Emshwiller sold the paper the week after he died.

After Emshwiller, the paper was briefly owned by L. Parker Likely and Fred A. Likely, Jr. In August 1946 the Times-Tribune Corporation, owned by Robert M. Feemster, Allison M. Feemster, and Allison's son David A. Feemster, purchased the paper. Robert was born in Cambridge City and after graduating from DePauw University in 1933 went to work for the *Wall Street Journal*. He played a leading role in directing the growth of the New York-based newspaper and became a member of the executive committee of the *Wall Street Journal*'s parent company, Dow Jones & Company, in 1945. By the time of his death in a plane accident in January 1963, Robert was in charge of advertising, circulation, and promotion for all Dow-Jones publications.

Robert Feemster died four days before the sale of the *Times-Tribune* to Darrell L. "Bud" Zink was to be finalized. A native of Salem, Zink had been editor and manager of the paper since May 1957. The sale of the paper, delayed by Feemster's death, was

completed later in 1963, however, and Zink, a sometimes outspoken and controversial editor, owned the paper until 1971, when it was purchased by Ray Barnes's Elwood Publishing Company. Born in West Virginia in 1896, Barnes moved with his family to Ohio when he was young and began his publishing career with the *Mansfield (Ohio) News*. In 1941 he purchased the *Elwood Call-Leader*, the first of a chain of papers that, by the time of his death in 1988, had grown to eleven. At one point Barnes owned small newspapers in Ohio, Colorado, Kansas, and Arizona, as well as Indiana. It was Ray's son Jack L. Barnes who organized the 1971 consolidation of the *Alexandria Times-Tribune* and the *Tipton County Tribune* (acquired the same year) with the *Elwood Call-Leader*. Jack served as president of the Elwood Publishing Company after his father's death. In the mid-1990s Jack Barnes turned over the publishing duties to Robert Nash, a longtime employee of the *Times-Tribune* but continued as the president of the Elwood Publishing Company, a title he retained in 1999.